

***Questions about food safety, excessive costs facing Marine Corps' primary food vendor***

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47) today announced that she is asking the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to investigate the U.S. Marine Corps' primary food services vendor for excessive waste and possible food safety concerns. Sodexo, which is currently nearing the end of its eight-year, \$881 million contract with the Marine Corps, has been under scrutiny following multiple reports of food safety non-compliance and a drastic, mid-contract change to its food operations.

"The government has an obligation to use taxpayer dollars responsibly," said Rep. Sanchez, who is the ranking female member on the Armed Services Committee. "There are significant concerns that Sodexo's food services have been more expensive and less effective than originally promised. I'm asking the GAO to investigate these claims, which will help our Armed Forces better evaluate future food service proposals. This is part of a larger effort to target waste in government."

In 2001, the Marine Corps decided to consolidate its food service contracts at the national level in the hopes that it would save about \$20 million per year and free up 594 food specialists for other assignments. To meet these goals and win the new contract, Sodexo proposed centralizing much of the Marine Corps food production at a "cook-chill" facility in Tennessee, where food would be prepared, refrigerated, and shipped around the country for reheating on base. But in July 2007, Sodexo terminated its Marine-related operations at the facility even though its "cook-chill" technology gave Sodexo a competitive advantage during the bidding process.

Sodexo's decision came just one month after a voluntary USDA recall of nearly 3,000 pounds of chicken that may have been contaminated with the *Listeria* bacteria, some of which was shipped to Camp Pendleton and the Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. In fact, public records show that there had been a pattern of food safety problems at the facility both before and after the USDA recall, including 70 USDA records of food safety noncompliance between December 2005 and September 2009.

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